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**CONTINUITY OF THE OTTOMAN MUSIC IN  
THE MUSIC CULTURE OF THE TURKISH  
COMMUNITY IN MACEDONIA TODAY**

Abstract

Several centuries of the presence of the Ottoman culture in the region of Macedonia reflects on the musical culture of the local population especially on the members of the Turkish community. The continuity of the Ottoman music is evident in: musical repertoire, music instruments and the traditional ceremonies. However, as a result of the characteristics that constitute modern day living, musical tradition of the Turkish population is experiencing certain transformations in the past few decades. Therefore, in this text we are referring to the level of the presence of continuity and the changes that occurred in all the spheres of the Turkish musical culture today. The modifications are especially present in the secular (urban and rural) music and they are manifested through: reduced use of the traditional instruments, use of electronic musical instruments (synthesizer), modifications in the tonal structure of the musical works, narrowing of the musical repertoire, integration of imported repertoire and changes of the texts of the traditional songs. The continuity of tradition is more consistent in the spiritual music in the ritual services in the mosques, while in the dervish tradition, narrowing of the musical repertoire and integrating of the secular melodies in the spiritual ceremonies is evident. The occurred modifications in the musical culture of the Turkish population in Macedonia are the result of the mass migration of the population in the 50-60s, reducing in that way the musical potential, and also the reflections of the globalization that is increasingly entering even in the most subtle segments of the modern day living.

**Key words:** musical culture, Ottoman music, continuity of the tradition, musical instruments.

## INTRODUCTION

Several centuries of presence of the Ottoman culture in this region reflects on the musical culture of the local population, especially the Turkish community living in Macedonia. With all its specifics it may be considered as a continuity of the Ottoman musical culture and tradition. The continuity is evident in almost all the segments of musical culture: musical genres, musical forms, musical system, musical instruments, repertoire and interpretation.

However, undisputed is the fact that after the Balkan wars, musical tradition of the Turkish population in these regions acquires a different idiom, which is a result of the process of acculturation, mutual mixing of the cultures living in these geographical areas, as well as of the globalization. All these factors lead to certain modifications in almost all of the components of the musical culture of this population and in that way it gets its own physiognomy and own idiom by which it differs from the native musical culture.

Since it is a very broad topic, in this text we decided to represent the characteristics of musical culture of the Turkish population in Macedonia in the form in which it exists today with emphasis on the changes that are obvious in the last few years.

We carried out the operationalization of the goal set through collecting data using several instruments: field research in the rural and the urban settlements, recorded video and audio material from different time periods of everyday and festive events, as well as the interviews with representatives of all the segments of the subject of our interest.

### 1. MUSICAL GENRES IN THE TURKISH MUSICAL CULTURE IN MACEDONIA

When talking about the musical culture of the Turkish community in the Republic of Macedonia, it indicates the presence of two musical branches both in the past and in the modern music milieu. They are: secular and spiritual music.

#### 1.1. Secular music

Secular music is consisted of: *the urban* and *the rural* music. These are two genres that differ from one another in many ways. In addition to the difference in instruments, the urban and the rural music differ regarding the forms, tonal structure, as well as the contents of the musical works.

*The urban music* in the Ottoman period represented the extended form of the court music. According to some modern Turkish musicologists, many of these songs represent works of eminent musicians who remained anonymous. This is

confirmed on the basis on the fact that they represent works of the classical school, and at the same time they are treated as the brightest repertoire in the field of the secular music.

This repertoire, that in the musical tradition of the Turkish population here represents one segment of the so called *Rumelian music*, usually contains lyrical songs with bright and cheerful spirit and has its own idiom.

In addition to the inherited repertoire from the Ottoman culture, the repertoire of the modern Turkish urban music here contains musical works that are product of the contemporary local composers from the Turkish population.

As a result of the isolation from the frequent urban areas, *the rural music* tradition is characterized by greater authenticity. The repertoire of this genre is experiencing more regional variants, which primarily relate to the instruments, as well as the dialect and the content of the texts of the songs.

From the field research we concluded that this repertoire contains two types of musical works: a) autochthonous – created as an inspiration from certain local events and b) songs that are present even in the geographically distant regions, as for example, South Eastern parts of Turkey.

## **1.2. Spiritual music**

Depending on the place where liturgical ceremony is being held, there are two types of spiritual music: *the music in mosques* and *the music in tekkes* (mystical music).

*The music in mosques* doesn't include use of the instruments, i.e., it is performed *a capella*, while the ceremony consists of a standard repertoire arising from the spiritual conventions and the spiritual ceremony. The music in this spiritual form has a functional role and it is used in the ceremonies at the mosques.

By contrast, *the music in tekkes* surpasses the role of its function, and in that way becomes a means of direct communication with the Almighty. Many musical instruments are used in the liturgical ceremonies, as well as a wider range of musical forms. Despite the fact that the orthodox Islamic tradition shows certain intolerance towards the instrumental music, it is the musical activity in the tekkes since the time of the Ottoman state that has a great contribution to the music through the creation of spiritual musical repertoire. The tekke has had a major musical role in the cultural life of the large cities. These institutions served as places where eminent musicians gathered, even the members of other religions, where they led discussions about music and at the same time listened to music. Therefore, almost all the most important composers were at the same time authors of the secular and the spiritual music. Hence, if the court was an official musical institution, the tekke

could be called a civil association that had an exceptional role in the diffusion of musical knowledge and the transmitting of musical experience from generation to generation. Very often, these institutions were considered as city conservatoriums where musical tradition was disseminated.

In Macedonia, unlike the 40s when there were 72 (according to Ulema-Medzlis of Skopje), today only five tekkes are active, where ritual ceremonies of the dervish orders Rifai, Sadi (branch of the Rifai), Bektashi, Halveti and Melami are practiced. By regular practicing of the spiritual ceremonies or forming of several *spiritual musical ensembles*, these tekkes have a large contribution in maintaining the continuity of the spiritual music tradition that originates from XII – XIII century.

## 2. MODIFICATIONS IN THE MUSICAL TRADITION

Over the past few decades, significant changes occurred in the musical tradition of the Turkish population in Macedonia, which over the last two decades have taken more intensive swing. According to our perceptions, these modifications occur as a result of the social-political situation, the process of acculturation, as well as the process of globalization. Although these changes are present in all the music genres, they are most significant in the urban part of the secular music.

The changes that we have tracked during the field research of the musical tradition in both spheres of the secular music are related to the following segments: *reduced use of the traditional instruments, usage of the electronic musical instruments (synthesizer), modifications in the tonal structure of musical works, narrowing of the musical repertoire and integrating of the import repertoire.*

The modification which is most significant in the musical culture of the Turkish population relates to *the musical instrumentarium*. The traditional instruments (kanon-zither, tarabuka-hourglass drum, ut-lute, saz, nei-flute, dajre-tambourine etc.) that were present in the chalgia orchestras in the urban music up to the 60s, today represent a real rarity.

Musical instruments characteristic of the rural tradition (tapan-cylinder drum and the zurna-double reed horn) are used today in a very small part of the rural settlements, mainly in the villages of Western Macedonia.

Generally, musical instrumentarium at both fields of the secular music is based on using of the contemporary electronic instruments –the synthesizer. This situation is a result of several factors: sound possibilities of the instrument that enables getting of all the sound colors and imitation of the traditional instruments,

as well as the economic viability of the possibility to replace whole orchestra with an individual person.

The use of synthesizer causes changes not only in the sound colors, but also in *the melodic structure* of the makams, typical for the Turkish music, because of inability to interpret the micro-intervals on the well-tempered instrument.

The autochthonous musical repertoire in the field of the secular music known as *Rumelian* is narrowed today in Macedonia to a less than two hundred musical works. The narrowing of the repertoire represents long-lasting process which is a result of several factors. As the primary, we would like to mention the fact that this repertoire is transmitted by oral tradition. But, in the global changes that are reflected in each segment of everyday life, especially through the increased use of technology (satellite transmitters, computers etc.) the possibilities of *importing* of musical cultures from other regions are increased. In that way, the consuming of the musical repertoire from the native Turkish culture and from the Western provenance (Anglo-Saxon music) is increased. At the same time, the influence of the music of the dominant culture in the state that is increasingly represented in the repertoire content is inevitable, especially among the younger generation. As a result of all this, the presence of the autochthonous repertoire at the public media is decreasing intensively (radio-television shows), of the public performances, as well as the traditional ceremonies and festivities (circumcisions and weddings etc.)

The changes in the sphere of the spiritual music are related to the musical tradition in the tekkes. Generally, in the five tekkes that are active in Macedonia, narrowing of the repertoire of the musical works that are used in the spiritual ceremonies is noticed. The number of musical forms that mainly consists of *ilahi*, *gazels* and *kasides*, whose number at the beginnings of the last century was up to two hundred, is now reduced to several tens. In addition to this, the use of the authentic language in the musical forms that are from other ethnic communities is increased among the members of the dervish orders. That kind of example is noticed especially in the *sadic tekke* “*Vefa Baba*” from Skopje, where in recent decades the Roma language is integrated in the spiritual compositions.

The other change that we have noticed in this tekke in which at the spiritual ceremonies special attention is paid to the musical performance, is in the use of the musical instruments. Unlike in the past, when in the musical tradition of this dervish order only the percussion instruments were used traditionally (*def*, *kudum* and *cylindric drums*), from the beginning of this decade during the holiday *zikrs* (*Bayram* and *Ashura*), various melodic instruments were integrated there too, like for example, *clarinet*, *saz*, and even the *synthesizer*.

Also, as an interesting phenomenon in this tekke, we emphasize the integration of melodies of the secular music that are combined with spiritual texts (Islam

and Leskova 2011). This phenomenon can also be treated as a part of the wider segmentation of the musical genres in the secular music as a result of the globalization of the musical culture (Taylor 2001:119).

## CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, we can say that the musical tradition of the Turkish population in Macedonia represents continuity of the Ottoman musical tradition that is experiencing modifications in the last decades. This is the result of significant migration of the Turkish population- especially in the 50s as a consequence of the social-political situation at that time. In that way the active musical potential is markedly narrowed (vocal and instrumental performers) as a source of the future dissemination of this musical tradition.

However, today it exists in all its genres and forms, with bigger or smaller modifications and transformations. As a result of that, it acquires its own image and idiom by which it differs from the native culture. In this state of the musical culture of the Turkish population in the Republic of Macedonia, the most important musical nucleuses that have the most significant role in preserving and conserving of this musical genre are the institutional and the non-institutional forms of education. Of the institutional forms, we will mention the schools, especially the only independent school in Turkish language “Tefejuz” in Skopje. Musical education in this school takes place by studying and playing the traditional musical instruments, of which saz is mostly used.

At the non-institutional forms of education, cultural-artistic societies where the musical activities are taking place have the main role. Studying the traditional instruments is enabled there, with the autochthonous repertoire, as well as studying of some folk dances. Through the public performances of both forms of education, preserving and dissemination is enabled, and in that way the continuity of the musical tradition in this environment.

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